

Testimony in support of Raised Bill No. 945
AN ACT CONCERNING WORLD LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS

My name is Bert Neumaier and I currently am a world language supervisor in West Hartford. I have also served as world language teacher and department coordinator in Farmington as well as in South Windsor where, in 1987, I was selected as the district and eventually the state Teacher of the Year.

Since 2000, I have also worked for the Department of Higher Education as part of the Alternate Route to Certification Program where, during summers and on weekends, I train highly qualified individuals to become world language teachers ready to enter CT world language classrooms. Over these nine years, my methods teacher partners and I have trained over 250 teachers.

I have served in many leadership roles in the CT Council of Language Teachers including president during the years preceding the language profession's national standards development.

My purpose today is to add my voice to those supporting the decision at hand to include a two year requirement for CT students. This is indeed a wise decision and supported by the myriad reports from commissions, committees, think tanks and groups of many educational leaders that offer direction to preparing our youth for the 21st century.

Even going back to the SCANS report (The Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills), improving communication skills and increasing cultural awareness are included. More recent reports refer to effective communication using real-world tools with real-world, global applications, cultural literacy, the ability to exhibit sensitivity to cultural issues, to interact and communicate with diverse cultural groups.

Over my years of teaching and serving as an administrator, student "light bulb" or "ah ha!" moments, those times when the students visibly make a connection in the classroom, often fell into three groups:

1. Making connections with English language learning as well as in their own first language if it was different,
2. Making connections with cultural practices or products of a new culture, where the students recognized similarities, differences, and most importantly, the concept of different being simply different,
3. Showing the pride associated with successful communication in every day real to life activities in the classroom.

All these connections support key elements of improving communication skills and cultural awareness and are part of the national standards which can be summarized by what are called the 5 C's" Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, Communities.

I encourage you to support this legislation which will help all CT students benefit from the many and different ideas learned in a world language class. World language classes will provide preparation for the global world our students live in and in which they will soon work.

Thank you very much.

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